

Fight as You Train

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What training can a unit conduct at home station to help reduce accidents and injuries while deployed? Honestly, there are just too many tasks to list, but help is available. The Coalition Forces Land Component Command provides training priorities to units preparing to deploy, including driver training, rollover drills, crew coordination and prevention of heat casualties. Proper training and information, along with identifying and preventing complacency and indiscipline, equips your Soldiers with the tools they need to stay in the fight.

A driver training program that reinforces good, fundamental driving skills while training in garrison greatly enhances a unit's ability to successfully complete its missions in combat. Driving an M998 or M1025/1026 HMMWV at the Joint Readiness Training Center or National Training Center and then transitioning to an M1114 in combat requires drivers to modify their driving habits. The handling characteristics of the M1114 are vastly different from other HMMWVs. Understanding the impact of this vehicle's increased weight on its braking and steering and adjusting accordingly can reduce accidents and rollovers.

Enforcing the use of seat belts and gunners' restraints also will reduce your unit's risk for fatalities. The risk of dying in a rollover is six times greater for Soldiers not wearing their seat belts in a HMMWV, while 94 percent of Soldiers who used their seat belts survived a rollover incident. Excessive speed and the driver's experience level are factors leaders can monitor and control while conducting operations.

Units that practice rollover drills reap the benefits of that training in disciplined, skilled and competent vehicle crews that react instinctively during a rollover. While deployed, ensure your Soldiers participate in HMMWV Egress Assistance Training. HEAT can increase a Soldier's ability to understand the disorientation involved in a rollover and instill the fundamental skills needed to react and survive if they're ever involved in one. HEAT training also teaches Soldiers the value of wearing seat belts and reinforces the importance of securing loads within the vehicle. Soldiers surveyed after using HEAT devices in Kuwait said the training is as realistic as possible, and about half the Soldiers reported they learned a new skill. Graphic Training Aid 55-03-030 is a comprehensive guide that covers emergency procedures and water egress.

Crew coordination is a combat multiplier in any organization and works for all types of equipment operations. U.S. Army aircrews practice crew coordination and benefit greatly from this concept. Effective crews are made up of assertive crewmembers that continuously provide input to the vehicle commander or team chief as the mission is being developed and conducted.

A key component of crew coordination is the clear understanding of terminology and signals, as well as keeping every crewmember posted on relevant details. Develop a crew coordination program within your unit and make it standard operating procedure. Also, ensure the entire crew participates as a team in mission planning, execution and after-action reviews.

Another area that continues to be a major concern for leaders and Soldiers is heat-related injury. Heat injuries and illnesses pose a significant threat to Army personnel both deployed and at home. Indiscipline and complacency can be deadly when Soldiers don't hydrate before, during and after operations in the extreme heat of the summer months. Those most at risk for heat injury are the youngest and most inexperienced Soldiers, which means leaders should monitor these personnel more closely.

According to the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, there were 204 cases of heat stroke and 958 cases of heat exhaustion reported in the Army in 2005. Prepare your team now for the extreme heat they'll encounter in Iraq and Afghanistan. Also, know which of your Soldiers have suffered previous heat-related injuries. USACHPPM reports that in the last five years there has been no clear trend in heat stroke among Soldiers; however, there has been a sharp increase in heat exhaustion over the past three years.

USACHPPM and the U.S. Army Research Institute for Environmental Medicine have several heat injury prevention products available on their Web sites, including posters and pocket guides. Leaders should use all the resources available to them and their Soldiers as we enter the hot summer months. Don't let a heat casualty happen in your formation.



Training Soldiers before deployment to drive equipment responsibly and defensively is an easy way to ensure they're competent operators when the mission requires them to maneuver in combat. Soldiers should be prepared for the unique challenges of the combat environment by training fundamental skills and developing good habits. Leaders must also identify any unsafe acts or habits in garrison so Soldiers don't bring them into combat. There's a lot of free information out there for leaders to pass on to their Soldiers. Take advantage of it and keep your Soldiers in the fight.

For more information on the fundamentals of crew coordination, see the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division's Power Point presentation on the Army Knowledge Online site at <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/doc/6350417>. An AKO username and password is required to access the site.

Too Much of a Good Thing

Just as Soldiers can suffer a heat injury by not drinking enough fluids, they also can drink too much. Hyponatremia is a condition where the sodium concentration in human blood is lower than normal. Causes include overhydration, skipping meals or dieting, loss of body salt or misdiagnosis and treatment for dehydration. Those suffering from hyponatremia can exhibit symptoms such as confusion, weakness or nausea and vomiting. If you believe a Soldier is suffering from hyponatremia, help replace salt loss and follow the measures for heat exhaustion. If symptoms persist or become more severe, evacuate the Soldier to a medical facility. To prevent hyponatremia:

- Follow fluid replacement guidelines
- Replace lost salt by consuming meals and sports drinks as directed
- Provide snacks or carbohydrate electrolyte beverages during long training events
- Don't take dietary supplements

FYI

The Combined Arms Center-Training recently developed "The Road to Deployment" Web site for commanders as a "one-stop shopping" spot containing requirements for deploying units. The Web site provides FORSCOM and CFLCC training requirements, as well as a number of links to information and capabilities that will help commanders meet those requirements. The site's SIPRNET URL is <http://rtd.leavenworth.army.smil.mil>.